

DRIVING ADVISORY DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING



Every year, around 5% of reported road collisions - totalling around 4,500-5,000 incidents annually - involves a drink-driver, with just under 300 fatalities.

More than 1,640 fatal and serious crashes are linked to illegal and legal drugs, while drugs of all types (legal and illegal) were detected in 19% of all deceased drivers.



The law



Alcohol

In Northern Ireland, England and Wales, the legal drink drive limit is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. In Scotland it is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood.

How much it's possible to drink (a couple of pints? A big glass of wine? One G&T?) and still be below the limit doesn't come into it.

Every person, and every situation is different, depending on all sort of factors, including body size, gender, genetics, ethnicity, metabolic rates, hormone and enzyme levels, how much you've eaten and the types of drinks.

The only way to absolutely guarantee you're not over the limit is to drink no alcohol.



Illegal drugs

It's an offence to drive, attempt to drive, or be in charge of a vehicle with certain drugs in the body. The limit is very low indeed. Tiny amounts of eight drug types including cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy can be detected, and will result in a driver being arrested.



Medicines and over the counter drugs

The offences of driving while under the influence that apply to illegal drugs also apply to eight prescribed drugs, although the legal limits are usually higher, and above the prescribed doses.

It is imperative that a driver on prescription drugs know exactly what they are allowed to take, and consult a medical professional if they are unsure.

Other medicines can also result in drivers being prosecuted for being unfit to drive.

Ultimately, any drug or medicine can affect your ability to make good decisions, slow reaction times, reduce alertness and impair physical condition. If there is any chance at all of this happening, don't drive.



The impairment

Research shows that it's not just when drivers are over the limit that they suddenly become a risk. With a blood alcohol level between 20 mg/100 ml and 50 mg/100 ml, they are three times more likely to be killed in a crash than those with no alcohol in their blood.

Over 50 mg/100 ml but 80 mg/100 ml, and so below the legal limit in the UK, apart from Scotland, and the risk increase to is six times greater.

With drugs every substance, and even variety within each type, can have wildly different effects on impairment. There's just no way of knowing how seriously it will affect you and your driving, except that it will.



5 steps to avoid drink and drug driving

1 The strength and size of drinks can vary, especially if you're drinking in bars or restaurants. It's easy to be drinking more, and stronger, drinks than you anticipated. Be careful to know exactly what you've ordered. If you have any doubt, don't risk it.

2 It's been shown that even the smallest amount of alcohol in drivers, well below illegal levels, can impair judgement and risk analysis, slow reactions, increase stopping distances, and reduce the field of vision.

3 It takes about an hour for a healthy liver to remove one unit of alcohol (about a third of a pint or large wine), so it takes far longer than most people realise to get rid of the alcohol in their systems.

4 The morning after catches out lots of drivers who consider themselves to be law abiding. Four pints of 4% lager could take 10-11 hours to leave the system, meaning a night out followed by an early start puts the driver in the danger zone of still being over the limit.

5 Drugs can stay in the system for hours, or even days, and the driver may not even feel impaired by them. But they may well still be, with slower reactions, a lack of concentration, confusion, aggression and severe fatigue some of the side effects. And this is not just illegal drugs: medicines for colds, flu and hay fever can cause drowsiness and impair driving ability.

Had a drink, but below the limit?

3x

more likely to be killed in a crash



Over the limit?

6x

more likely to be killed in a crash



How to avoid drink and drug driving

Simple tip, this one. Just do not do it.

Even if you've 'only had one or two', or just feel really rough and have taken strong medicine, seriously consider if it's worth the risk of getting behind the wheel.

RED Advisories

RED has produced a series of advisory leaflets covering everything from towing to fatigue. To download a copy, click [here](#)



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